

SWCD Information Technology Assistance

Background

In 2014, The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB) Long Range Planning Committee set the following actionable goals related to state conservation programs implemented through a Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD):

- a) develop plans to increase use of technology to go paperless, save money, and ensure uniform standards for communicating information;
- b) provide districts with resources to operate independently (computer, etc).

Targeted IT Assistance

To implement recommendations, agency staff identified information technology solutions to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of state conservation programs implemented through SWCDs.

- Email – *SWCD email hosted by Google Apps*
- File Storage – *SWCD network storage hosted by Google Apps*
- Internet Service – *PC Internet access via a cellular data plan*
- Laptop and printer purchase assistance – *Hardware purchased via local / nationwide vendor*

Considerations for SWCDs

1. SWCD participation is optional.
2. All hardware / services are provided for the implementation of State conservation programs.
3. Email and File Storage will be provided by TSSWCB at no cost. Funding for hardware purchases and internet service will be advanced.
4. The program will be updated yearly, with amounts adjusted each year to reflect changing costs. The TSSWCB will use pricing from state contracts to determine amounts.
5. Purchases will be documented using an online web application.
6. Replacement of hardware will follow an established state life cycle. Emergency replacement of hardware before life cycle end will require TSSWCB approval.
7. Assistance is contingent upon funding appropriated by the Legislature. In the event funds are not appropriated, assistance is subject to cancellation, either in whole or in part.
8. Acceptance of funds acts as acceptance of the authority of the State Auditor's Office, or TSSWCB, to conduct an audit or investigation in connection with those funds.

FY 2015 Highlights

1. Email Hosting and File Storage:
 - a) Google Apps email and file storage – paid for and provided by TSSWCB.
 - b) Office productivity and other features are also available in Google Apps that a district may wish to investigate for use.
2. Cellular Data Service:
 - a) \$450 allocated for 12 months of expenses at \$37.50 per month. Prorated after September.
3. PC Hardware:
 - a) \$500 allocated for the purchase of a laptop.
 - b) \$100 allocated for the purchase of printer.
4. Additional software purchases and warranties will be a district determination and expense. Examples include extended laptop warranty and Microsoft Office.
5. The SWCD commits to filing a timely Annual Conservation Implementation Assistance Performance Report with the TSSWCB.

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